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A Testimony Concerning Louis Antoine Majdier
1844

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A TESTIMONY

FROM THE

TWO MONTHS' MEETING OF CONGÉNIES, OF
THOSE WHO PROFESS WITH FRIENDS,

CONCERNING

LOUIS ANTOINE MAJOLIER,

WHO DIED AT CONGÉNIES THE SIXTH OF 3RD MONTH, 1842.

Read in the Yearly Meeting of 1844.

Translated from the French.

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A TESTIMONY

From the TWO MONTHS' MEETING OF CONGÉNIES, concerning LOUIS ANTOINE MAJOLIER, who died at Congénies the 6th of 3rd Mo. 1842.

“BLESSED are the dead who die in the Lord, for they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them.”

Although in thinking of our beloved friend, this may be the language of our hearts, accompanied by a feeling of gratitude, as it respects himself, yet when we think of ourselves, and of the empty seat which he has left amongst us; when we remember his tender exhortations and his lively interest in our little society, we deeply feel our loss, and are at times almost absorbed by the feeling of sorrow.

Louis A. Majolier, was born at Calvisson, in the Department of Gard, in the 4th mo. 1764. His parents belonged to a sect which afterwards professed principles similar to those of the Society of Friends in England, even before they knew that such a society existed. This sect had sprung from another, known by the name of “the prophets,” which, after being divested of the mystical and fanatical opinions which distinguished them, had adopted principles similar to those of Friends, on the spirituality of the Gospel dispensation, on ministry, and on worship. They met in silence to worship God, and waited for the influence of the Holy Spirit, before they expressed anything in their assemblies, and they considered that as the gift of the ministry has been freely received, it should be freely exercised.

Although the parents of our dear friend were not rich, and had not themselves received much instruction, they

obtained an education for their son, beyond what those who are similarly circumstanced can usually procure. This was a great advantage to him, and in after life he acquired additional information on a variety of subjects. This, united to a sound judgment and an upright course of conduct, qualified him for a wise counsellor and a good arbitrator in the profession which he undertook. On leaving school he was placed with a notary at Ambraix, where he remained many years, and where he acquired, in a remarkable degree, the esteem and entire confidence of the family in which he resided.

His parents wished him to pursue the study of the law, and had he seen it right to follow the course in which he set out, he would no doubt have been a distinguished character, as he possessed good abilities, much ardour for study, and very industrious habits. The confidence which he inspired, joined to the benevolence of his disposition, by which he gained the love of all who knew him, procured him so many friends, that his way appeared easy. But he could not accept the offers that were made to him. He soon saw that he was called to another work, and that his life must be devoted to the service of his Divine Master. The little society, of which he was a member, became the object of his tender solicitude. It was in a state of great weakness, and there existed among its members a great mixture of good and bad. At that time they knew of the existence of Friends in England, and they had seen some of their books. Louis A. Majolier examined their principles, found them in accordance with the Gospel, and thought himself called to promote the spread of them. On that account he felt that he could not follow a profession so absorbing as that for which he was preparing himself; a profession which would also expose him to a compromise of his principles—he did not hesitate, he left all and followed the simple trade of a stocking-weaver.

About this time he was married to Mary Brun, of Fontanés, a member of the society to which he belonged. She has been to him a faithful and affectionate wife, through a long and painful life, full of cares and trials, in the bringing up of a numerous family; but she can bear her testimony that in the seasons of their greatest extremities he never murmured, always relying on Him who had graciously provided for them in all their necessities.

It was soon after his marriage that the Friends in France received the first visit from Friends of England and America. This was paid to them by George and Sarah Dilwyn, Mary Dudley, Robert and Sarah Grubb, Adey Bellamy, and John Eliot. This visit, with others which they afterwards had, strengthened our dear friend in the principles which he had already imbibed, and being enlightened from on high, he understood their spiritual nature, and their accordance with the Gospel. From that time he thought himself called to the ministry, and also devoted himself to the education of the children of his fellow-professors. He opened a school at Congénies, where he came to reside, as that village was the centre of the rising society: but his task was a difficult one; there were many errors to be extirpated among those with whom he felt called to labour. He was often discouraged, but, to use his own expression, an irresistible power impelled him, and he received strength to persevere; and although young at that time, he was the instrument of a favourable change amongst the Friends. His trials were great from within and from without, and his faith was often ready to fail; yet when he did not trust to his own strength, he was permitted to make some progress in the work to which he was called; but from what he says himself, if he at all went before his guide he involved himself in still greater difficulties.

He was thus employed when the troubles of the revolution came, and changed the face of things; the school

was suspended, and they were no longer permitted to meet for worship. He had then to suffer from privations of all kinds; he saw himself frequently without any means of supplying the wants of his family, but he always acted with the greatest disinterestedness, still thinking of those who were worse off than himself, and contributing to their relief by dividing with them the little that his great industry procured him. He says, with respect to this period: "I was once on the point of being put in prison, and of becoming a victim to my devotedness for having dared to write in favour of my friends; but I escaped by means of some of my friends who were in office, and who were attached to me."

He had the affliction at this time of trial to see those for whom he was so interested draw back from the pursuit of good. In a letter to Mary Dudley, after having described the sad situation of the country, he thus writes: "And all this added to the deep affliction of daily seeing those whom I had endeavoured to lead forward, withering before the blighting wind of this terrible trial, those young plants whom I had cultivated, and whom I loved in spite of their deviations, whose weakness I pitied; with these feelings, accumulated in the inmost of my soul, I secretly called upon the Most High, and sought the counsel of his wisdom. I then saw that I could do nothing better than remain in the ark, until the waters of this abominable deluge should be dried up. I had, however, my eye upon this little flock, and I contemplated it with sorrow; it seemed to me as if all the work I had endeavoured to do was entirely lost; the number of those who shared my trouble was very small; our religious meetings here were not wholly interrupted, in spite of the prohibitions; but they were less regular and less numerous. We were in continual alarms, and the devouring cares of this life almost entirely choked the word, and rendered it

unfruitful." He met with another sore trial, the evil judgment of those for whom he had made so many sacrifices ; being exposed to the jealousy of some and to the calumny of others : but this did not cool his love for them ; he received all as permitted for his good, and felt that he suffered for his Master and for the sake of his cause, and this gave him strength to bear what was extremely painful to his affectionate disposition.

In the year 1791, after this period of confusion, he visited England, where he was received with great kindness, and where he obtained a more accurate knowledge of the discipline of the Society of Friends ; but the wars which soon followed for many years wholly interrupted the communications between the two countries.

After the revolution he was employed in the sale of the lands which had belonged to the nobles, when he gave proof of great uprightness and disinterestedness. He had the means of enriching himself, but would not take advantage of this unhappy period ; he bought nothing for himself. His family increased, and he found it difficult to provide for their wants : as soon as he was allowed to do so, he recommenced the school, and some time after acted as a surveyor under the new taxation undertaken by Buonaparte, and was for many years thus employed. In this difficult office, he was remarkable for his strict uprightness, and thus gained the respect and esteem of all amongst whom his lot was cast. The duties of his profession took him away from his family, whom he dearly loved, and although overcome often by fatigue, in having to provide for a family of eight children during a time of scarcity, war, and perplexity, he was calm and resigned, happy in being still enabled to impart some relief to others. He saw, however, that this occupation, was not that to which he was called ; he says in the letter which has already been quoted, " The part which I had taken in the affairs of the Govern-

ment was in some respects honourable, since it had an influence in establishing proportionate justice and equity in the assessment of the land-tax ; but the sting of necessity kept my soul in painful uncertainty ; I wished to be in many places at one and the same time, this was not possible. In the meantime not only our discipline became relaxed, but the education of our children, and particularly of my own family was neglected. I was engaged in a very painful conflict between my religious duties and the making a necessary provision for the wants of my family. But O, my dear friend, I saw to my great affliction that I ought not to have hesitated so long in choosing the best part. I was greatly afflicted, and I acknowledged, but perhaps too late, that the manifestation of the supreme will cannot be resisted with impunity." . . "I was in the midst of this trial at the time of the visit of our dear friend Stephen Grellet, towards the end of the year 1813 ; that visit was a great consolation to me, and from that time I determined to relinquish every occupation which could divert my attention from my beloved family and our little flock, and to give up a situation which afforded me much ease and outward gain, in order to attend to the education of young people, a painful employment at my age, as it obliges me to pass a sedentary life, which is injurious to my health ; but I believe duty calls first, and that without bearing the cross we cannot obtain the crown."

From his profession of a valuer of land, he was afterwards called in as arbitrator in cases of differences in families, and in the division of property ; on these occasions he did honour to his religious profession by his strict justice and impartiality ; so that he was often sent for from a considerable distance from his home.

His ministry was simple, but energetic and persuasive. He called the attention of his hearers to the spirituality of the

gospel dispensation, to the necessity of a change of heart and affections, to the baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, to that new birth without which we cannot be accepted of God. In his youth, and when he was in health, he often felt himself called to visit his brethren of the same faith ; having a very lively sympathy for his friends who were situated at a distance from the places where meetings were held ; and he embraced every opportunity which presented itself to encourage them to persevere in faith, in patience, and in waiting upon Christ. It was not to himself, to his own words, or to anything visible that he was concerned to direct the attention of his friends, but to Jesus Christ the Saviour, the way, the truth, and the life, testifying that all have access to the Father through faith and obedience. When circumstances did not allow of his visiting his friends, he conveyed his feelings to them in writing, and his letters always bore marks of experience of the same zeal and love.

His religious labours were almost entirely confined to the members of our little society ; yet he went twice to St. Etienne to visit a small community in the neighbourhood of that town, consisting of individuals who had separated themselves from the Roman Catholic worship, and who professed principles similar to those of Friends. He was well received, and had extensive service amongst them, and he afterwards kept up an interesting correspondence with a few individuals of them.

He was affable and kind to all, ready to be serviceable to his neighbours and friends, as well as to strangers ; and the superior information which he possessed often qualified him to be useful to them. He had good health, and was remarkable for his sober habits, his industry, and the serenity of his mind, the expression of which was strikingly visible in his countenance. The last years of his life were spent at Congénies ; his time was principally

occupied in making translations from the writings of Friends. A translation of the works of Richard Clarridge, which he completed in the early part of the year 1837, appeared to fatigue him; and in the 6th mo. of the same year he was attacked with paralysis. For many days fears were entertained for his life; but though he was greatly weakened by the attack, it pleased Infinite Wisdom to restore him so far as to enable him to superintend his own concerns, to attend meetings, and to minister to the spiritual wants of his friends. It was evident to them that his communications were more and more fraught with love to all; and although his bodily weakness deprived them of a part of the energy for which they had been remarkable, it was deeply felt that they proceeded from the same source; his mental faculties remained unimpaired, although he had no longer the strength to employ his time as before, and his perceptions of divine things remained the same.

In the 8th mo. 1840, during the visit of a Committee of the Meeting for Sufferings of Friends in London, he had a second attack, which threatened his life. In the course of this illness his patience and resignation were remarkable, and he appeared prepared for heaven; but it pleased the Lord again partially to restore him, so that he was permitted to attend meetings, and to encourage and exhort his friends. Although after those attacks, and particularly after the last, his power of speech was considerably impaired, it was very remarkable that his religious communications were always clear and intelligible.

He remained in this state of weakness until the 2nd mo. 1842; when he was suddenly attacked with internal inflammation, which weakened him very fast. From the beginning of this illness he thought that it would be his last, and that it was a call to a better world, and he received the message with all the calmness of the

Christian who is at the disposal of his Master ; with him all was submission to the Divine will, and the expression which he most frequently uttered was, " May the will of God be done," and this his countenance conveyed more than his words. He evidently passed the greatest part of his time in prayer. One day, one of his daughters wishing to know how it was with him, asked him if his thoughts were turned towards God, he quickly answered, " Oh, yes, always." After having said to him that she hoped he had a trust that when the Lord should call him from this world, he would exchange a life of trial and suffering for a state of happiness, she added, that his life had been such that God would not forsake him at last, he quickly answered, as if to reprove her for this last expression, which seemed to attribute to him some merit, " Do not say that: O, yes, I hope, but I feel that I have need of mercy; there is nothing but that," or to that effect. He often spoke of death with surprising calmness. To another of his daughters, who had cared for him during his years of weakness, and who says that she never left his room in the evening without hearing him a short time after engaged in imploring the blessing of God, praising him for his goodness, or supplicating for his pardon ; he said one day, with a smile, " The fruit is ripe, then it must be gathered." On the 4th of the third mo. a friend for whom he had long been interested came to see him ; he appeared much pleased with the visit, and before he parted from him, he said, " Keep near to Him who has already enlightened thee, and He will be thy guide ; attend to the manifestations of Him who has said, ' I am the way, the truth, and the life.' What may have appeared to thee (meaning our principles) full of imperfections, contains, on the contrary, what is the most perfect : do not remain in a state of uncertainty, in which thou wilt suffer loss. I

should like to see thee again attend our meetings, I think thou wilt find peace in it."

He had evidently nothing to do in his last moments, and he said many times that he was happy in the prospect of death, adding, at one time, "All you have to desire for me is, that I may have an easy passage;" and this, his last desire, was abundantly granted him. In the evening of 7th day, the 5th, he thought his last hour was arrived; he had his family called, named those whom he did not see round his bed, and had strength to say, "May the will of God be done! Farewell, all; love one another; live in peace, and the God of peace will be with you." To a friend, who came to see him, he sweetly said, "Thou seest me at the end of my life." And when she remarked, that she believed he was going to enter into a better life than the one he was leaving, he said, "Oh, yes;" and immediately turning to his daughter, who had for some time moistened his lips, he said to her, proving his anxiety to be gone, "And thou lengthens my life." But on her observing to him that it was right to the last to give every relief to the poor body, he added, with sweet submission, "Well, then, lengthen it." Some time after, feeling himself weaker, he said, "Now I am going; fare thee well; do not give me any more; I want nothing more." He remained some time in a state of apparent sleep, which was interrupted only by the motion of his hands, which he often clasped before him, and he was evidently in prayer. In the evening of the 6th of the 3rd mo. 1842, his spirit was dislodged from its earthly tenement, and, we doubt not, is gone to the abodes of the just. He was aged seventy-eight years, and had been a Minister about fifty-four years.

THE END.





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